



Late Backup

AUSTIN'S PLASTIC BAG BAN WILL COST CONSUMERS, PUT JOBS AT RISK RECYCLING IS A BETTER SOLUTION

The Austin City Council is proposing to ban or tax plastic grocery bags, a move that would limit consumer choice and impact thousands of people employed by the industry. Plastic bags – a U.S. and Texas-made product – are sanitary, safe, and 100 percent recyclable and reusable. By targeting a single product, a ban does not address the greater environmental issue of litter. It does not make sense to put Texas jobs at risk when a comprehensive solution to litter exists, one that does not target a specific product, impact jobs or limit consumer choice.

Here are the facts...

A ban on plastic grocery bags hurts Texas' working class and threatens jobs

- In Texas, there are 15 plastic bag manufacturers, employing more than 2,600 people. The industry supports an additional 6,200 jobs. That's 8,800 Texas-based jobs at risk if a ban passes.
- Unemployment in Austin has been growing in recent months and the state faces an 8.2 percent unemployment rate.ⁱ Forcing Austin residents to pay a new tax or to purchase reusables impacts those who can least afford it.

Bans and taxes don't reduce litter

- According to the U.S. EPA, plastic bags account for .05% of the waste stream; banning one product will not have a real impact on litter.
- In 2002, after Ireland taxed its plastic bags, sales of heavier plastic bags, such as garbage bags, increased by 400 percent.ⁱⁱ Their Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government admitted that although consumption temporarily declined, it then rose again.ⁱⁱⁱ
- One year after San Francisco banned plastic bags, plastic bag litter actually increased to .64%, up from .60%.^{iv}

Plastic bags are 100% recyclable and reusable

- Recycled plastic bags are used to make new plastic bags and building products, such as backyard decks, playground equipment, and fences.
- Plastic bags are not "single use." Ninety percent of Americans report reusing them for other household uses.
- Hilex Poly has worked with retailers to establish more than 30,000 plastic bag recycling points across the United States over the past four years to make recycling easier.
- In Texas alone, Hilex has recycled over 5.5 million pounds of used bags and wraps in the past two years.

Recycling is the better solution for Austin's economy and the environment

- Plastic bag recycling is one of the fastest growing green industries in the U.S., and addresses all forms of plastic bags, wraps and films.
- Plastic bags can and are being recycled. In 2009, nearly 854 million post-consumer plastic bags and wraps were recycled.^v Plastic bag recycling has doubled in the past nine years.^{vi}

Hilex Poly is the nation's largest plastic bag manufacturer and operates the largest closed-loop recycling facility in the United States. It has three plants in Texas.

ⁱ Bureau of Labor Statistics; Local Area Unemployment Statistics; June 2011.

ⁱⁱ Rural Affairs and Environment Committee; The Scottish Parliament; April 16, 2008; page 11.

ⁱⁱⁱ PLASTIC BAGS LEVY TO BE INCREASED TO 22c FROM 1 JULY NEXT; Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, February 21, 2007.

^{iv} The City of San Francisco Streets Litter Re-Audit; San Francisco Environment Department, July 4, 2008; 35.

^v Moore Recycling Associates, Inc. on behalf of the American Chemistry Council.

^{vi} EPA recycling of bags and wraps; 2001-09.

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